

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 HALIFAX 0006

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SUBJECT: ATLANTIC CANADA'S SPRUCE BUDWORM WAR:
THE 1978 OUTLOOK

REF: 77 HALIFAX A-8, 77 HALIFAX 0047

BEGIN SUMMARY: AT THIS TIME OF YEAR THE GOVTS OF NB,
NS, AND NFLD EACH DECIDES WHETHER TO COMBAT THE GROWING
SPRUCE BUDWORM PROBLEM BY A PROGRAM OF AERIAL SPRAYING.
EACH OF THESE PROVINCES HAS IMPORTANT LUMBERING AND PULP
AND PAPER INDUSTRIES AND EACH, TO A GREATER OR LESSER
EXTENT, IS SUFFERING FROM BUDWORM-CAUSED FOREST DAMAGE
WHICH THREATENS THE VIABILITY OF THESE INDUSTRIES.
ALTHOUGH THE FOREST INDUSTRIES FAVOR AERIAL SPRAYING TO
COMBAT THE BUDWORM THREAT, THIS IS OPPOSED BY ENVIRON-
MENTALISTS AND BY MANY FISHERMEN AND FARMERS.

AS 1978 OPENS, BOTH NB AND NFLD HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT
THEY WILL SPRAY, WHILE NS, WHICH HAS THUS FAR MADE NO
PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT, WILL PROBABLY ABSTAIN AGAIN THIS
YEAR FROM SPRAYING.

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FOR NFLD, 1978 WILL BE THE FIRST YEAR OF AERIAL
SPRAYING OF ITS FORESTS. THE DECISION TO SPRAY WAS
TAKEN ON THE ADVICE OF A BLUE-RIBBON PANEL WHICH
SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN SOUND RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH AVOID
BOTH THE EXCESSIVE CLAIMS OF THOSE WHO NORMALLY FAVOR
SPRAYING AND THOSE WHO NORMALLY OPPOSE IT. A MAJOR
PROBLEM, HOWEVER, WHICH THE PANEL HAS PROBABLY ONLY

PARTIALLY OVERCOME, IS THE LACK OF COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE BUDWORM/FOREST MANAGEMENT PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

1. THIS IS THE SEASON WHEN EACH OF THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES MUST MAKE ITS ANNUAL DECISION WHETHER TO HAVE AN ANTI-BUDWORM AERIAL SPRAYING PROGRAM DURING THE COMING SPRING AND SUMMER. THE PEOPLE OF PEI ARE LUCKY IN THIS RESPECT. IT WAS LONG AGO DECIDED THAT (A) THE ISLAND IS TOO DENSELY POPULATED TO PERMIT A SPRAYING PROGRAM WHICH MIGHT BE HAZARDOUS TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND (B) THE ISLAND'S FOREST COVER IS OF SUCH LOW QUALITY IT ISN'T WORTH SAVING ANYHOW. THE OTHER THREE ATLANTIC PROVINCES, HOWEVER, EACH HAVE MILLIONS OF ACRES OF COMMERCIALLY VALUABLE SOFTWOOD STANDS IN AREAS REMOTE FROM CENTERS OF POPULATION. THEY ALSO HAVE (AGAIN, UNLIKE PEI) MAJOR PULP AND PAPER INDUSTRIES, THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF WHICH ARE IMPORTANT NOT ONLY TO THE COMPANIES THEMSELVES BUT ALSO TO THE PROVINCES WHERE THEY ARE LOCATED.

2. BUT THE PULP AND PAPER COMPANIES SEE THEIR VIABILITY THREATENED BY THE INCREASED INFESTATION OF THEIR WOODLANDS BY THE SPRUCE BUDWORM. MOST OF NEW BRUNSWICK SUFFERS FROM MODERATE TO SEVERE INFESTATION, ALL OF NOVA SCOTIA'S CAPE BRETON ISLAND SUFFERS FROM A SEVERE INFESTATION, UNCLASSIFIED

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TATION, AND LAST YEAR A MODERATE INFESTATION, WHICH BEGAN IN 1971 IN THE WESTERN PORTION OF NEWFOUNDLAND, WORSENERED AND SPREAD TO OTHER AREAS ON THE ISLAND. IN ALL OF THESE AREAS MODERATE TO SEVERE DEFOLIATION TOOK PLACE, ALTHOUGH NEW BRUNSWICK, WHICH HAS HAD AN ACTIVE AERIAL SPRAYING PROGRAM SINCE 1952, CLAIMED THAT IT HAD ACHIEVED A GOOD MEASURE OF CONTROL OVER THE BUDWORM IN THOSE AREAS WHERE ITS SPRAYPLANES HAD OPERATED.

3. TO SPRAY OR NOT TO SPRAY: WHICH IS THE CORRECT COURSE TO FOLLOW? THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS BY NO MEANS EASY TO COME BY. LOOK AT THE GROUPS WHICH FAVOR SPRAYING AND THE GROUPS WHICH OPPOSE IT AND ONE SEES VESTED INTERESTS ON BOTH SIDES. FAVORING IT ARE THE PULP AND PAPER COMPANIES, THE SAWMILLS, AND (UNDERSTANDABLY) THE INSECTICIDE MANUFACTURERS. OPPOSING IT ARE ENVIRONMENTALISTS, FISHERMEN, AND AGRICULTURALISTS. THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY IS DEVIDED AND CAN BE FOUND ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE.

4. WHAT DECISIONS, THEN, WILL THE PROVINCES OF NEW BRUNSWICK, NOVA SCOTIA, AND NEWFOUNDLAND MAKE ON AERIAL SPRAYING OF FOREST LANDS IN 1978?

A) AFTER A SOLID QUARTER-CENTURY OF SPRAYING,
NEW BRUNSWICK WILL SPRAY AGAIN IN 1978. FENITROTHION
WILL BE THE INSECTICIDE OF CHOICE AND THIS YEAR IT
WILL BE MIXED WITH FUEL OIL RATHER THAN WITH THE
COMMERCIAL EMULSIFIER ATLOX WHICH HAS BEEN ACCUSED
BY SOME OF TRIGGERING OUTBREAKS OF REYES SYNDROME,
A FREQUENTLY-FATAL CHILDREN'S AILMENT.

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B) ALTHOUGH NO FIRM DECISION ON SPRAYING IN 1978
HAS YET BEEN MADE BY THE NOVA SCOTIA CABINET, ALL INDICATIONS
ARE THAT THE ARGUMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS
WILL AGAIN PREVAIL AND THERE WILL BE NO SPRAYING
DONE. AS RECENTLY AS NOV 15, THE NS MINISTER OF LANDS
AND FORESTS GAVE A PRETTY CLEAR INDICATION OF THE
THINKING OF THE NS GOVT WHEN HE SAID:

NOT ONE THING ABOUT SPRAYING SPRUCE
BUDWORM THAT HAS BEEN SAID BY THE
PRIVATE SECTOR, NOR ANY OF THE FIGURES
TURNED UP BY EITHER THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT OR THE PROVINCE OF NEW
BRUNSWICK JUSTIFIES ANY CHANGE IN
THE NO-SPRAY POLICY OF THE CABINET
OF NOVA SCOTIA.

C) A BLUE-RIBBON PANEL, COMPOSED MOSTLY OF
SCIENTIFICALLY-TRAINED PERSONS FROM NFLD'S MEMORIAL
UNIVERSITY, MADE A FOUR-MONTH STUDY OF EXISTING

LITERATURE ON THE SPRUCE BUDWORM AND ITS CONTROL.
IN OCT 1977 THE PANEL RECOMMENDED A LIMITED AND
MOST SEVERELY SAFEGUARDED SPRAY PROGRAM FOR THE
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PROVINCE. THE PANEL'S REPORT WAS MOSTLY ACCEPTED AND
ENDORSED BY THE GOVT OF NFLD WHICH HAS DECIDED TO SPRAY
TWO MILLION ACRES (APPROX 14 PERCENT OF ISLAND'S FOREST
LANDS) IN 1978. THE INSECTICIDES CHOSEN WERE
FENITROTHION (TRADE NAMES SUMITHION AND ACCOTHION)
AND AMINOCARB (TRADE NAME MATAcil), WHICH WILL BE
USED EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR IN COMBINATION.

5. COMMENT: THE VOICE OF REASON IS DIFFICULT TO
HEAR AMIDST THE HYSTERICAL OUTPOURINGS OF THE
ALL-OR-NOTHING ADVOCATES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE
SPRAYING ISSUE. PERHAPS THE MOST BALANCED
RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE COME FROM THE NFLD BLUE-RIBBON
PANEL WHICH, WITH NO ECONOMIC OR COMMERCIAL
AXES TO GRIND, FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO TAKE A MIDDLE
POSITION. THE PANEL MADE 11 RECOMMENDATIONS
WHICH, BOILED DOWN, ADVOCATED A VERY LIMITED SPRAYING
PROGRAM WITH FENITROTHION OR WITH A
COMBINATION OF FENITROTHION AND BACILLUS THURINGIENSIS
(BT) FOR AN INITIAL PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED TWO YEARS,
WITH CONTINUED AND EXTENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING.
AFTER THE TWO-YEAR PERIOD, A SEARCHING ASSESSMENT SHOULD
BE MADE OF THE CHEMICAL CONTROL PERIOD. IN THE MEANTIME,
EFFORTS SHOULD CONTINUE ON DEVELOPING HOST-SPECIFIC
BIOLOGIC CONTROLS AND ON DEVELOPING SILVICULTURAL
TECHNIQUES TO REDUCE THE SUSCEPTIBILITY OF THE STANDS TO
INSECT ATTACK.

6. THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS DO NOT POINT THE WAY
TO THE CHEAPEST SHORT-OR LONG-TERM PROGRAMS OF
BUDWORM SUPPRESSION, WHICH IS WHY THEY ARE MOST
UNLIKELY TO BE ADOPTED IN TOTO. NOTE, FOR EXAMPLE,
THAT THE PROVINCE OF NFLD WILL VIOLATE ITS OWN PANEL'S
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RECOMMENDATIONS BY PERMITTING AT LEAST SOME USE OF THE
INSECTICIDE AMINOCARB, WHICH ADMITTEDLY GIVES MORE
BANG FOR THE BUCK WITH RESPECT TO TOXICITY TO BUDWORMS
BUT WHICH ALSO HAS POSSIBLE UNDESIRABLE ENVIRONMENTAL
SIDE EFFECTS. THE WORD "POSSIBLE" IS USED ADVISEDLY
SINCE THERE IS APPARENTLY INSUFFICIENT DATA ON

THIS INSECTICIDE TO MAKE FIRM JUDGMENTS AT THIS TIME.

7. THIS LACK OF DATA, UNFORTUNATELY, EXISTS NOT ONLY WITHIN INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLINES AND FIELDS OF STUDY BUT ALSO ACROSS THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF DISCIPLINES WHICH MUST BE CONSIDERED WHEN A SPRAYING PROGRAM IN CONTEMPLATED. AS ONE PERSON PUT IT IN A RECENT ARTICLE:

THERE ARE EXPERTS ON BUDWORM BIOLOGY,
THERE ARE EXPERTS ON THE FOREST, THERE
ARE EXPERTS ON NATURAL RESOURCE ECONOMICS,
THERE ARE EXPERTS ON CONTROL TECHNIQUES,
THERE ARE EXPERTS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL
EFFECTS OF SPRAYING, AND THERE ARE EXPERTS
ON THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES.

BUT FEW, IF ANY, OF THESE WOULD CLAIM
FULL COMPREHENSION WITHIN THEIR FIELD
AND NONE, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, CLAIM TO HAVE
A WORKING UNDERSTANDING OF ALL FIELDS
INVOLVED IN THE BUDWORM/FOREST MANAGEMENT
PROBLEM. END COMMENT.

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